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Gordon Wells
gwells@cats.ucsc.edu

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Collaborative Educational Research in Spain

Gordon Wells

Earlier this year, I was privileged to speak with educators in Spain when I was invited to address conferences in Barcelona and Bilbao, organized by the Ministries of Education in Catalonia and the Basque Country, respectively. My hosts during the visit were members of the Center for Social and Educational Research at the University of Barcelona ([CREA](#)). They gave me a wonderful welcome and introduced me to some of the attractions of Catalonia, including a tour of Gaudi buildings, a visit to the remains of the Greek and Roman city at Ampurias on the Costa Brava, meals in a variety of excellent restaurants, and the best place to buy anchovies in Spain. To end my visit, I was accommodated in Bilbao in a hotel room with an excellent view of the Guggenheim museum of art just across the street.



But more importantly for Networks, they introduced me to the work they are doing to create "learning communities" by involving families and volunteers more centrally in the organization and activities of schools in both Catalonia and the Basque Country. As we talked, we came to recognize the complementarity of their initiatives and the work of teacher researchers who are trying to create communities of inquirers and learners in their own classrooms. In Bilbao I talked about the powerful effects of encouraging students to become inquirers who share in the responsibility for deciding on the questions they will investigate and I played videoclips illustrating the work, among others, of the DICEP group in Toronto [see [the last issue of Networks](#)], with whom I worked for ten years before moving to my present position in Santa Cruz, California. There was considerable interest in the arguments I made for "dialogic inquiry in the classroom" and a lively discussion followed my presentation. However, because of problems with the technology for translation, there was not time to respond to the many participants who wanted to continue the discussion. Several sent me their questions in writing, which could be the basis for a written exchange.

As a result of these meetings, I have decided to try to include occasional bilingual (Spanish/English) issues in future volumes of Networks, in which the theme of "communities of learners/inquirers" would be explored from different perspectives by teacher researchers and by school-community-university collaborative partnerships in Spanish- and English-speaking countries. The first such bilingual issue is already in preparation, coordinated by Marta Soler at CREA., with the proposed title *Educación Dialógica: La Escuela En España Hoy / Dialogic Education: Schools In Spain Today* . The intention is to include articles by different groups in Spain, who will describe the various approaches they are taking toward the common goal of creating a more "dialogic" form of public education, in which diverse voices participate.

If any readers would be interested - or know of others who might be interested - in coordinating or contributing to such bilingual issues, please contact me by email. The teacher researcher movement is one of the most effective means of empowering teachers to bring about change in their classrooms and schools. So it seems a desirable next step to try to extend the dialogue among educators who share this commitment to working for the transformation of public education.